

# NEWS

## *A Pilot Takes Off in Kings County, Calif.*

**F**SA field staffs are used to dealing with large, unwieldy aerial maps of farms. But our broad, Agency-wide effort to upgrade to computer-based maps and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools will change that. An expanded effort has now begun in Kings County, Calif. to develop methods to establish information sharing partnerships with state and local entities. Information sharing with entities outside of USDA will further improve efficiency, while meeting the changing needs of America's more technologically advanced producers.

Currently, every five years our Aerial Photography Field Office (APFO) staff in Salt Lake City, Utah takes aerial photographs of our Nation's farmland. The staff converts these photos into 24" by 24" maps for local FSA offices that use them to determine acreage and program compliance. FSA employees have relied on this paper-based method for many years, but the large maps are cumbersome, and it is difficult to share information with other offices.

Enter the computer age to move us ahead and improve our service delivery! The U.S. Geological Survey creates digital computer images from high-altitude aerial photos. APFO is assembling these photos into seamless mosaics of entire counties. The mosaic images will eventually replace the 24" by 24" maps. APFO's effort in this area is a critical link to migrating away from the paper-based maps. These high-resolution images combine the image characteristics of a photo with the geometric qualities of a map (imagine a photo of hills and valleys



Kings County FSA staff and the Agricultural Commissioner's staff. Back row: David Unruh, FSA CED; Tim Niswander, Assistant Agricultural Commissioner; Les Wright, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner; Ruben Arroyo, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner; and Dennis Bray, Agricultural Commissioner-Sealer of Weights & Measures. Middle row: Joan Avila, FSA Program Technician; Lilly Sanchez, FSA Program Technician; Kathy Sargent, FSA Chief Program Technician; and Steve Schweizer, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner. Front row: Diane O'Daniel, Executive Secretary, Agricultural Commissioner; Eugenia Gonzales, FSA Program Technician; and Winnie Brogan, FSA Program Technician.

draped over a 3D model of the same land).

Several USDA service centers around the country have already begun using the digital photos as part of the overall GIS development effort. Maintaining the images and the corresponding geospatial data (field boundaries, soil survey data, land use information, etc.) in a digital format eliminates many of the difficulties associated with sharing the information with other USDA

offices. Digital information can be shared through computer networks, eliminating the need to make photocopies of the maps and related information. The project in Kings County goes further by launching the development of standardized methods for sharing this digital information with state and local entities that also serve agricultural interests in their locations.

*See PILOT,  
continued on page 4*

## ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

### ***Congratulations to the Hammer Award Winners!***

It was my pleasure to assist Deputy Secretary Rominger and Under Secretary Schumacher in honoring FSA employees at the presentation of Vice President Gore's Hammer Awards on May 8. Hammer Awards are presented to pioneering government employees who have made significant contributions toward building a better government. These awards go to teams that have streamlined government, saved money, solved problems, and made large impacts on customer service and bottom-line results. The symbolic hammer harkens back to yesterday's government and its \$400 hammer. The Hammer Award consists of a \$6 hammer, a ribbon, and a note from the Vice President.

This year, five FSA teams were saluted for their accomplishments. They are:

#### ***Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Team***

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is a state-Federal

conservation partnership targeted to address significant water quality, soil erosion, and wildlife habitat issues related to agricultural use. Through this voluntary initiative, farmers are taking action to protect the environment, ensure safer drinking water, and become even better stewards of the land. As Vice President Gore recently stated, "We are forging new partnerships with states and their farmers to ensure both a healthy environment and a strong, sustainable economy." All of the team members have gone far beyond the call of duty to get this vital work done. These dedicated, committed people have worked together to make this program a tremendous success.

#### ***Electronic Bid Entry System***

The Electronic Bid Entry System (EBES) allows vendors to submit bids for commodities procured by USDA for food aid exports. This system is estimated to save the government \$12 million annually, increasing the number of people fed for each dollar USDA has available for food assistance. For USDA, EBES has resulted in lower product costs, less data entry, and fewer overtime hours. Our commodity suppliers now have a greater ability to reflect up-to-the-minute market intelligence when they submit bids. All these benefits combined result in increased competitiveness and lower program costs. This system is a fine example of what can happen when we partner with our customers to work online.

#### ***Total Quality Systems Audit Program Team***

The Total Quality Systems Audit (TQSA) Program Team effectively verifies the quality of food purchased by USDA for export and domestic programs. The team has done this with less than half the staff used under the old inspection system. TQSA allows our auditors to work with suppliers to ensure that they can consistently provide quality products for our programs. TQSA returns the responsibility for quality assurance to the manufacturer, where it belongs. This team greatly improved the quality of food products and made a meaningful difference through partnerships with commodity suppliers. They have put customers first and achieved results Americans care about.

#### ***USDA Field Gleaning and Food Recovery Team***

This team pioneered innovative and cost-effective food recovery and field gleaning projects across the country. Thanks to these employees, over 8 million pounds of recovered food have given millions of meals to hungry Americans during the past 2 years. In 1999, the amount of food gleaned was more than 4 times the volume recovered in 1998. USDA employees across America have taken action and made a real difference in saving nutritious fruits and vegetables that would otherwise have been wasted. With no additional staff or money, the results of this team project truly demonstrate a government that works better and costs less.

#### **FSA NEWS**

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## Unified Export Strategy Team

The Unified Export Strategy Team successfully reinvented the planning and application process for the Market Access Program and Foreign Market Development programs operated under FAS. Each U.S. private sector applicant is now able to incorporate multiple requests for foreign market promotion and development assistance into a single, consolidated proposal. This ensures that program applicants incorporate a better coordinated approach using the 12 Agency-wide export development programs. This team has reduced the payment time for reimbursable claims from three weeks after submission to an average of just three days. Overall, the annual administrative cost savings to the Government is estimated at more than \$1.9 million.

Please see the complete list of Hammer Award winners on page 4. I thank all the awardees for working together to put customers first, cut red tape, and get back to basics. I am proud of your outstanding efforts to reinvent government. Your accomplishments showcase FSA at its best.



## PILOT

*continued from first page*

California SED Val Dolcini volunteered to lead the task of developing this type of an information sharing partnership with entities in his state. Dolcini selected Kings County in central California as a test site. CED David Unruh and his staff are continually looking for ways to maximize efficiency, and they have the space, personnel, and tools needed for this effort.

The county staff will be working with the local agricultural community to develop a method for sharing the imagery and geospatial information with several state and local government agencies. These include the Kings County Agricultural Commissioner, the California State Department of Food and Agriculture, and the California State Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Project sponsor Chris Niedermayer, Assistant to the Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, notes that, "FSA and these other agencies use similar data on land, crops, and producers, but collect and manage the information separately. This is often redundant and costly, and places a burden on customers who must report information about their land use and crop production to multiple agencies."

In this pilot partnership, FSA and its partners will collect common information on acreage, crop planting, etc., just once from customers. The data will be maintained in an electronic repository accessible to all partners. Sensitive information that is required by only one of the agencies or falls under the protection of the Privacy Act will be maintained individually and confidentially. The partners will share the cost of collecting and managing the data. At some point, customers and their agents may also be able to access their own files and provide information electronically.

"Sharing the collection and management of geospatial information offers many potential benefits for FSA, other agricultural service providers, and our customers," says Dolcini. "It will

improve our customer service, simplify our work, and reduce operating costs. We will have access to a broader range of data, making our Agency more efficient, especially in responding to natural disasters and other emergencies. It will reduce our collection of duplicate information and ease the reporting burden on producers."

This project is also in line with the Administration and Congress' desire for greater collaboration and information sharing among government agencies and other service providers. Also, the use of GIS is evolving rapidly in and outside the Federal sector, so we want to keep FSA at the forefront of this new technology.

Dolcini says, "By partnering, we can greatly improve our service to the county's agricultural producers. This is an exciting venture, one we hope will lead the way for similar partnerships across the Nation." CED Unruh agrees. "The project fits right in with our commitment of one-stop service to agricultural producers. And it gives us the ability to qualify growers for loans or disaster relief more quickly by providing timely and accurate crop information. The diversity of information available through this project has already enhanced our export of California's agricultural commodities to Pacific Rim countries."

Dennis Bray, Kings County Agricultural Commissioner, says the idea of partnering for data collection will be a time saver for the farmers who work with his office and FSA. "This project will provide quick and accurate information, and provide critical tools needed by agriculture."

The Kings County staff plans to put the entire project to the test by this fall – the reporting season for crop planting. The outcome will help shape expanded partnerships with other service providers throughout the country. As FSA further utilizes high technology, we continue to meet our main goal of helping America's producers.



## Hammer Award Winners

### Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Team



**Team Leader:** Parks D. Shackelford

**Partners:** FSA; NRCS; ERS; OGC; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Environmental Protection Agency; Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington state governments; New York City government; Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Ducks Unlimited.

**FSA Team Members:** Gregg Anderson, Margaret Arnold, Alexander Barbarika, Agnes Bush, Patricia Garamendi, Steve Gilmore, Rod Hamilton, Paul Harte, Stephen Hodapp, Virgil Ireland, Tim Jones, Cathie Kascak, Allien LaPierre, Mike Linsenbigler, Lisa Manning-Scott, Karen McGinnis, Harry Millner, Larry Mitchell, Andrew T. Nguyen, Angela Oliver, Beverly Preston, Fred Ringer, Caroline Roe, Parks Shackelford, Linda Schaefer, Kathy Schaffer, BeBe Shortall, Robert Stephenson, Angie Thompson, Merle Venezia, Jim Williams, Cheryl Zavodny.

### Electronic Bid Entry System



**Team Leader:** Nelson Randall

**Partners:** FSA

**FSA Team Members:** Jackie Blanks, Debbie Crow, Dennis Cushings, Jim Firth, Alan Grote, Amy Harding, Randy Hawkinson, Nancy Heintzelman, Vicki Hicks, Jeff Jackson, Dean Jensen, DeWayne Kalberg, Alan King, Dave King, Annette Lavailee, Dave Liem, Gary Miner, Steve Miteff, Jerry Patterson, Nelson Randall, Donna Ryles, Todd Shuck, Donna L. Testerman, Cita Trice.

### Total Quality Systems Audit Program Team



**Team Leader:** Dean D. Jensen

**Partners:** FSA, APHIS, GIPSA, Clemson University.

**FSA Team Members:** Catherine E. Johnson, James G. Johnson, Rebecca A. Lee, LaNell Stepp.

### USDA Field Gleaning and Food Recovery Team



**Team Leader:** Keith Kelly

**Partners:** FSA; Research, Education and Economics Mission Area; RD; RMA; NRCS; National Information Technology Center.

**FSA Team Members:** Larry Albin, John Alldredge, Debi Anderson, Vickie C. Anthony, George Arredondo, Albert J. Ayotte, William Baumgartner, Jeannie Blosser, Debra Borie-Holtz, Mark Bowen, Patricia Brecka, Sandra Brown, Cindy Burger, Billy B. Burke, Larry K. Burnett, John Cameron, Lee Carlson, Hanson R. Carter, Douglas J. Caruso, Wm. Donald Clifton, II, Wendy Collins, Willie F. Cooper, Charles M. Costa, Donald A. Davis, Tom Della Rocco, Al DiBella, Leanne Dilsworth, Mike Dunaway, Sandi Durham, Ross Eddy, Robert Eisenach, Wayne Enger, Brad Epperson, Mack G. Eubanks, Jr., Phillip Farland, Kevin Fitzpatrick, Mark Florance, Roberto Garcia, Don Gearing, Scherrie Giamanco, Tom Grau, Elaine Greer, Scott Hallett, Joseph L. Hawkins, Hampton H. Henton, Jr., Julie Hilding, Tom Howard, Jack Huber, James I. Humlicek, Susan Hunter, Gloria S. James, Jerome Jeffries, J. R. Kelley, Keith Kelly, Kevin L. Kelly, Alex King, Sue Rourke King, Theresa King, Jimmy La Voie, Laurie C. Lawson, Harold V. Mangum, Tim Manning, Bob Manuel, Heriberto Martinez, Fritz Matetzsch, Steve D. Maurer, Danette McClellan, James McConaha, David H. McDole, Richard McIntire, David Mendez, Wayne Morgan, Bruce E. Nelson, Monte Nevitt, Wendall Newman, Marty Norris, Michael W. O'Conner, Karen Olson, Terry L. Peach, Robert D. Peacock, Karen J. Petrus, Christina (Chris) Piper, Adrian Polansky, Harvey Polinsky, Ada Rivera, G. Arnold Roach, Daniel Robinson, Kent Rockstad, Richard R. Rush, Jack L. Sainsbury, Stephen Scates, David Schneider, Mary Sebben, Wayland Shurley, Marc A. Smith, Trish Smith, John G. Smythe, Wallace Sparby, Scott B. Stofferahn, Terry Streit, Dan M. Sundseth, Kaylyn Talbot, Nancy Toler, James M. Voss, J. Mark Warnick, David S. Warrington, Christine White, Lloyd H. Wilhelm, William G. Wilson, Dana Wycoff, Deborah S. Young.

### Unified Export Strategy Team



**Team Leaders:** Kent Sisson and Frank Tarrant

**Partners:** FAS, FSA, U.S. Agricultural Export Development Council, Sytel, Inc.

**FSA Team Members:** John Dorman, Carolyn Moore, Laura O'Reilly, David Stiles, Gary Tarr, Jim Wall, Susan Weisenburger, John Williams.

## Out of Missouri Charges the “Souper Bowl”

by Christine Zeigler, Communications Coordinator, Missouri State Office

**M**issourians are downright proud to claim two pro football teams, the St. Louis Rams and the Kansas City Chiefs, both past Super Bowl winners (the Rams, of course, claimed this year's championship). In February, in the spirit of celebration and to increase food security, FSA, NRCS, and RD folks put together their own winning “Souper Bowl” team, a soup collection effort.

FSA SED Brad Epperson, who is also the Missouri Food Security Liaison, coordinated the effort. He and the NRCS and RD Missouri agency heads asked their employees throughout the state to donate at least three cans of soup for distribution to the needy.

USDA service centers collected the cans, and the FSA District Directors

brought all the collected soup to the State Office in Columbia. To everyone's delight, the employees inundated the District Directors with a flood of soup – over 2,500 cans (2,000 pounds worth)! From there, the soup went to the Central Missouri Food Bank, a regional hunger relief network that provides food to 125 food pantries.

Peggy Kirkpatrick, Executive Director of the Food Bank, appreciated the time and effort expended and generosity shown by the many contributors. “Thank you for your donation and your gift of hope,” she said. “Perhaps the greatest aid we can give someone else is a chance for a better and brighter tomorrow.”

Way to go, Missouri! This is a fantastic example of a Team USDA effort to give those less fortunate a hand up.



FSA staffers Merideth Kay and Bo Wendleton sorting soup for the needy. *photo by Mary Stubbs*

## A Glimpse Inside Farm Programs



*photo by Eric Parsons*

These five lucky kids got a chance to ride in the early morning carpools and commuter trains for the trip to USDA's South Building. On April 27, they joined their parents (all Farm Programs employees) for “Take Our Children to Work Day,” a kid's look at the world of work. Left to right: Jeannette Pitcher with daughter Rachel, Earline Brown with granddaughter Nicole, Brad Karmen with daughters Jenny and Laura, and Elizabeth Hill with son Michael.

### PISTACHIO FACTS

According to Moslem legend, the pistachio nut was one of the foods brought to Earth by Adam. The trees were originally native to the Middle East. Humans have eaten pistachio nuts for at least 9,000 years. Pistachios changed very little until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when many new varieties were developed.

*Source: The Learning Kingdom*



## Minnesota's May Fiesta

by Patsy Steffen, Secretary, Minnesota State Office

**T**he Minnesota FSA, NRCS, and RD State Offices celebrated Hispanic culture around the world with a Cinco de Mayo celebration on May 10.

"El Cinco de Mayo," or the Fifth of May, commemorates the victory of an outnumbered Mexican army over the French troops of Napoleon III on May 5, 1862.



Carlos Quinche (left) and Leo Lara playing traditional Latin American music.

Leo Lara and Carlos Quinche, of Ecuador, presented the keynote address and entertained the crowd with Latin American folkloric music. These accomplished musicians can play over 40 instruments. They also displayed traditional musical instruments and encouraged the audience to experiment with various rhythms and percussion. The instruments were made from diverse materials like deer hooves, nutshells, seashells, gourds, armadillo shells, bone, and pottery.



Traditional musical instruments.  
photos by Patsy Steffen

Leo Lara also spoke about the history and meaning of music in the Hispanic culture. Music has always been a focal point of the culture, and the Hispanic people of Minneapolis and St. Paul are working together through music to build a stronger sense of community.

Anna Beckman-Almerico, daughter of FSA SED Tracy Beckman, spoke about her experiences with the Peace Corps in Bolivia, where she spent two years working in a rural community. Tracy used photos of her trip to showcase the community, customs, dress, and daily life of the Bolivian people.

Over 100 people attended the festive event, enjoying displays of traditional Mexican dress, music, and a drawing for a piñata. FSA, NRCS, and RD employees prepared ethnic dishes of Arroz Mexicana, Frijoles de Olla, Sopa, Pollo con Salsa de Mole, and pastries.

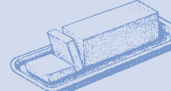
Attendees came away with a greater sense of the historical perspective of Cinco de Mayo and Hispanic cultures. Everyone had a great time at the celebration. It was informative, educational, and just plain fun!



Anna Beckman-Almerico  
speaking about her  
experiences in Bolivia.

### JUNE IS NATIONAL DAIRY MONTH

- One cow can give 200,000 glasses of milk in a lifetime.
- The first patent for margarine was granted in 1869 to a French chemist.
- One third of all ice cream sold is vanilla.
- A dairy cow munches her way through 110 pounds of fresh fodder a day. That's enough to fill 12 buckets!
- Butter has been colored yellow since the 1300s.
- The plastic milk container was introduced commercially in 1964.
- Dried milk was used as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century – by Genghis Khan's cavalry. The Mongol soldiers dried mare's milk to a powder in the sun to preserve it. Then, each day they put some of the powder in a water bottle hung on their horses' saddles. The horses' jogging acted like a whisk, turning the mixture into a thin porridge by nightfall.





## South Dakota Service Center Reaches the Peak

by Joyce Watkins, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist; and Kathy Lindquist, FSA Public Affairs Specialist, South Dakota State Office

In March, the Spink County, S.D., USDA Service Center received its State Food and Agriculture Committee's (FAC) first-ever Peak Achievement Award. The South Dakota FAC developed this annual award to recognize South Dakota USDA offices for excellent customer service.

The South Dakota FAC and the South Dakota Conservation District presented the award. State agency heads Mike O'Connor, FSA; Dean Fisher, NRCS; and Dallas Tonsager, RD; were proud to recognize the Spink County staff for their outstanding work in 1999.

The Spink staff handles a multitude of USDA programs for the county's 1,500 farms. In 1999, they disbursed \$34.7 million to the county's 2,750 farm operators and owners. Over the years, Spink County has grown from a small-grain county to the state's largest soybean-producing county last year. In 1999, the county grew 275,000 acres of soybeans, along with 162,518 acres of corn and 98,386 acres of wheat. The county's conservation-minded producers are concerned with the long-term health of their land. Along with many other conservation measures in place, the staff administers 62,000 CRP acres.

The employees also found time to help with community causes, including the local Christmas Adopt-a-Family Program. And they joined in the local food drive by donating food, gleaning melons and potatoes, and unloading food from semi-trucks.

Award recipients included: FSA employees Machel Albers, Dave Albrecht, Bill Becker, Shelly Binger, Diane Dangel, Barb Dickhaut, Ken Fehlman, Gwen Jackson, Dana Kleinssasser, Carolyn Lewis, Carmen

Mason, Bonnie Morris, Pat Payant, Rich Rische, Harold Shafer, and Russ Simon; NRCS employees Jim Dylla, Shane Jordan, Kim Kempton, Jim Millar, Regis Vialle, and Steve Winter; and Spink County Conservation District employees Simon Appel and Linda McLain.

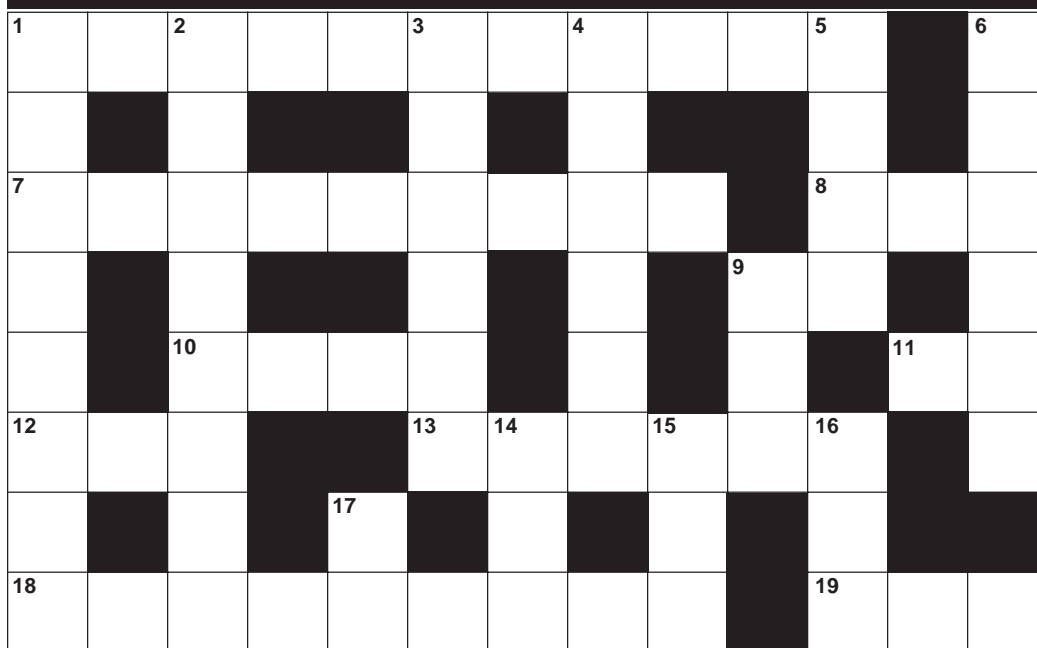
Upon receiving the award, FSA CED Rich Rische said, "It is truly an honor to be recognized by our peers. In such a large county, it is crucial to work as a team to provide the kind of customer service our producers expect and deserve."



Back row: South Dakota agency heads Dean Fisher, Dallas Tonsager, and Mike O'Connor, with Spink County employee Shane Jordan. Front row: Spink County employees Jim Millar, Rich Rische, and Bill Becker.



FSA Program Technician Ken Fehlman takes an oilseed application from a producer. Last year, producers filed more than 900 oilseed applications in the Spink County Office.  
photos by Kathy Lindquist

**JUNE FSA CROSSWORD****ACROSS**

1. Excessive \_\_\_\_\_ of crops may cause root pruning and loss of soil water due to increased evaporation
7. FSA's \_\_\_\_\_ Indemnity Program helps producers who suffer losses from natural disasters
8. Maple syrup's beginnings
9. Meet me \_\_\_\_\_ the barn dance
10. You'll have a poor harvest without this
11. Soup \_\_\_\_\_ salad?
12. USDA agency that administers the Crop Insurance Program
13. One of the youngsters coaxed by the witch to overeat and plump up

18. These loaves were once made from just flour, butter-milk, baking soda, and salt; but over the years, sugar and raisins have been added
19. One of a dozen

**DOWN**

1. Cheese, cottage cheese, and sour cream are all made by adding this to milk
2. \_\_\_\_\_ onions is not a favorite with many kids
3. Farmers help select county committee persons by doing this
4. Fishing equipment
5. Baby birds' home
6. DACO helps producers \_\_\_\_\_ their crops
9. A heifer is a young female over the \_\_\_\_\_ of one that has not produced a calf
14. Distillers use this grain to make whisky and gin
15. First name of President who said, "There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country"
16. Strong alkaline solution originally prepared by leaching wood ashes with water
17. This contagious disease can be spread by cattle

**CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

Date	Location	Event
June 5-7	Kansas City, Mo.	Alex King, Acting Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to visit KCCO
June 9-10	Myrtle Beach, S.C.	Larry Mitchell, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, to attend South Carolina Association of FSA County Office Employees meeting
June 11-13	Louisville, Ky.	Administrator Kelly to attend Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture conference
June 11-16	ports in Ill., La., and Tenn.	Alex King to make site visits to various ports
June 14-17	New Orleans, La.	Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs, to attend Farm Loan Programs Stakeholders meeting
June 15-16	Great Falls, Mont.	Administrator Kelly to attend NASCOE convention
June 19-23	Biloxi, Miss.	Administrator Kelly; Carolyn Cooksie; and John Williams, Deputy Administrator for Management; to attend NACS/NASP/NASE national convention
June 22	Charleston, S.C.	Alex King to speak at Cotton Warehouse Association annual meeting

*Note: The above is subject to change.*